नहीं होना चाहिए क्योंकि यह एक फ्री सोसायटी है, लेकिन यह जरूर कहूंगा कि किसी-न-किसी तरीके का अंकुश जरूर लगना चाहिए। Thank you, very much.

श्री सभापति: माननीय प्रधान मंत्री जी।

श्री नीलोत्पल बसु (पश्चिमी बंगाल): सर, एक प्रोसीजरल क्वैश्चन है। प्रधान मंत्री जी जो यह बयान लेकर आए हैं, हम इसकी सराहना करते हैं, लेकिन हमने इस सवाल पर पहले नोटिस दे रखा था। हम इस बात को मानते हैं कि प्रधान मंत्री जी अगर ईरान के मसले पर बयान देते हैं, उसमें हमें कोई हर्ज नहीं है, लेकिन चूंकि यह बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण मुद्दा है इसके ऊपर कुल मिलाकर एक डिबेट होनी चाहिए। ऐसा न हो कि आज प्रधान मंत्री जी का बयान आया और 7 दिन खिंच गए।

श्री सभापति: इतना लंबा समय नहीं लगेगा।

श्री नीलोत्पल बसु: सर, हमारे यहां राष्ट्रपति जी के अभिभाषण पर 21 तारीख से चर्चा शुरू होगी तो हमारे यहां 20 तारीख को इस पर बहस होनी चाहिए। यह हमारा मानना है, आप इसके बारे में तय कर लीजिए।

श्री सभापति: पचौरी जी।

कार्मिक, लोक शिकायत और पेंशन मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री तथा संसदीय कार्य मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री सुरेश पचौरी): सर, पहले स्टेटमेंट हो जाए।

5.00 P.M.

श्री सभापति: पहले आप स्टेटमेंट दीजिए।

STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER

India's vote in I.A.E.A. on Iran's Nuclear Programme

THE PRIME MINISTER (DR. MANMOHAN SINGH): Mr. Chairman, Sir, taking into account the concerns that have been raised about India's vote on the Iran nuclear issue at the meeting of the Governing Board of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, on February 5, 2006, I rise to apprise this august House of the facts of this matter.

Let me begin by affirming that India's vote on the IAEA resolution does not, in any way, detract from the traditionally close and friendly relations we are privileged to enjoy with Iran. Indeed, India-Iran ties, as we have repeatedly emphasized, are civilizational in nature. We intend to further strengthen and expand our multifaceted ties with Iran to mutual benefit.

Let me also state that the importance of India's relations with Iran is not limited to any single issue or aspect. This relationship is important across a wide expanse of cooperation, both bilateral and multilateral. We also cooperate on regional issues. We value this relationship and intend to do what we can to nurture our bilateral ties. Let me reiterate in this context that we are committed to the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. The economics of this project is currently under professional investigation by internationally reputed consultants. This is a necessary step in taking the pipeline project forward.

On the specific issue of Iran's nuclear programme, let me reiterate what I have said publicly on several occasions. As a signatory to the NPT, Iran has the legal right to develop peaceful uses of nuclear energy consistent with its international commitments and obligations. It is incumbent upon Iran to exercise these rights in the context of safeguards that it has voluntarily accepted upon its nuclear programme under the IAEA.

These rights and obligations must also been seen in context of developments since 2003, when IAEA began seeking answers to a number of questions arising from Iran's nulcear activities, some of which were undeclared to the IAEA in previous years. Subsequently, in context of these demands, Iran did extend cooperation to the IAEA in investigations of its some of these activities.

In November, 2004, Iran agreed with the EU-3 (France, Germany, and the UK) to voluntarily suspend all enrichment and reprocessing activities until questions relating to its past nuclear activities were clarified by the IAEA. However, since August last year, Iran has renewed production of Uranium Haxafluoride and thereafter, has resumed Uranium enrichment.

Successive reports of the Director General of the IAEA have noted that while Iran's cooperation has resulted in clarifying a number of questions, there remain many unresolved questions on key issues. These include the use of centrifuges imported from third countries, and designs relating to fabrication of metallic hemispheres. Hon. Members are aware that the source of such clandestine proliferation of sensitive technologies lies in our own neighbourhood, details of which have emerged from successive IAEA reports. This august House will agree that India cannot afford to turn a blind eye to security implications of such proliferation activities.

The objectives of upholding Iran's rights and obligations and our security concerns arising from proliferation activities in our extended neighbourhood have shaped our position. Therefore, our approach has been consistently in favour of promoting all efforts to find a solution, based on acceptable mutual compromises, in which Iran's interests and the concerns of the international community would be addressed. We have consistently worked to promote a consensus in the IAEA towards this end. This has been the logic of our stand at the IAEA Board of Governors Meetings both in September 2005 and earlier this month.

I might remind hon. Members that it is only on these two occasions that the Resolution that resulted has ***not*** been a consensus one, and a vote has been necessary. Despite that, in the latest vote this month, the Resolution not only had the support of all P-5 countries including Russia and China, but also of important NAM and developing countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, Ghana, Singapore, Yemen and Sri Lanka.

The resolutions passed in September last year and earlier this month underlined the need for time to be given for diplomatic efforts to continue. The recent resolution of February 5 asks the Director General of IAEA to inform the UN Security Council of the status of negotiations with Iran, and the steps that Iran needs to take to address these questions. It calls for continued diplomatic efforts including through exploration of the option provided by Russia, which we have supported. Hon. Members are aware that Russia had offered to locate a joint venture project on Russian soil to address Iranian needs for enriched Uranium, provided Iran suspends its enrichment programme to increase International confidence regarding the unresolved questions of the last two decades. Russia and Iran are currently in discussions on the subject, and we remain hopeful of a positive outcome. It is our hope and belief that the issues that have arisen can still be resolved through discussion and dialogue.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I have set out the background in which we have taken a position at the IAEA. I would like to reiterate our unshakeable conviction that such a sensitive issue, which concerns the rights and international obligations of a sovereign nation and a proud people can only be addressed through calm, reasoned diplomacy and the willingness on all sides to eschew confrontation and seek acceptable compromise solutions. We are therefore deeply concerned by escalating rehetoric and growing tensions and the possibilities of a confrontation over this

issue. This is a matter of concern for us as tensions in this region--where our vital political, economic and security interests are involved--affects us directly. The region hosts 3.5 million Indian citizens whose welfare is a major concern of our Government.

We therefore call upon all concerned to exercise restraint, demonstrate flexibility and continue with dialogue, to reach an amicable solution. As I mentioned, there will be another meeting of the IAEA Board in March this year at which a full and regular report will be presented by the IAEA Director-General. In the days to come, we will support diplomatic efforts in this regard, drawing upon our friendly relations with all the key countries involved.

The Government is conscious of the need to balance several important considerations in this regard. We have a strong and valuable relationship with Iran which we would like to take forward in a manner that is mutually beneficial. We have great respect and admiration for the Iranian people with whom our fraternal ties go back several millennia. We have every intention of ensuring that no shadow is cast on these bonds.

In the overall context that I have outlined in detail, I am confident that this august House will agree that the stance taken by this Government has been consistent and in keeping with our own well considered and independent judgement of our national interests. I am confident that this policy will receive the support of this House and our nation.

श्री सभापति: धन्यवाद, प्रधानमंत्री जी।

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI) : Sir, I would like to submit that the distinguished Member, Shri Nilotpal Basu, has very rightly conveyed his concern that he desires a structured debate. And, he gave a notice. We have discussed it in the Chamber also. The Government has no objection to welcome any structured debate on this issue and would be too happy to respond to it again. But my only difficulty is that the tradition of both the House has been that till we dispose of the debate on Motion of Thanks we cannot take up any other debate. The only day left to us is twentieth. Till now, we have not scaled the business of the Motion of Thanks. But, as I conveyed to you, Sir, earlier, while we discussed in the BAC and in

the House hon. Prime Minister would be preoccupied on that day because very, very important dignitaries, along with the President of France, would be visiting the country. Therefore, it would be difficult for the Prime Minister, being the Leader of the House, to attend the debate and respond to it as the House desires. Therefore, my humble plea to the distinguished Members would be they may kindly accommodate this shortcoming of the Government and adjust the situation immediately after the debate on Motion of Thanks so that we could attend sincerely and respond to the queries effectively.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU (West Bengal): Sir, I would like to respond to this observation by the hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs. You will recall that when we discussed this issue yesterday, in the BAC, we were inconclusive as to what would be timing of this debate. But, during my last twelve years in Parliament, I have never seen like this that the hon. Parliamentary Affairs Minister, with this whole issue hanging in fire, going out and speaking to the media and unilaterally announcing that this will be held on the 27th of this month. This is most unfortunate. This came today in the entire Press. This is something which will...

SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, I did not say in any media that the debate would be held on 27th.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: It will go beyond the debate on the Presidential Address. Secondly, Sir, Mr. Suresh Pachouri is sitting here. He is very, very knowledgeable insofar as precedents and procedures are concerned. There have been umpteen numbers of occasions where this House had started the Budget Session discussing subjects other than the debate on the Presidential Address. Normally we try to start our proceedings with the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address. But there have been several exceptions. We welcome the intention of the Prime Minister to make this statement before the House. But if we cannot accommodate a debate immediately following the statement the timing of the statement could have been postponed. Now, what we are saying is that even the Prime Minister need not be present in the House on the 20th, some other senior Member of the Council of Ministers can be here and we can have the debate on the 20th and the Prime Minister can reply later on.

SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, as I said,some section of the House, especially the distinguished Leader of the Opposition and

others felt, through their representative on that day, that in such an important debate, the Prime Minister, being the Leader of the House and Minister of External Affairs, need be present though not throughout the day, but to intervene and respond; therefore, I said so. If the entire House agrees that without the presence of the Prime Minister on 20th, this debate could be disposed of and later on Prime Minister may respond at his convenience, we have no objection.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI (Uttar Pradesh): No, this is not right.

THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): Sir, I have no objection at all. I don't think that there is any substantial point of principle and all that. It is a matter of seeking the convenience of the Government, and the House has always, almost invariably, taken into account, certainly, the Prime Minister's convenience. Now, in this case, of course, we would have been happier, because in the whole of the last Session of Parliament, for example, there were occasions when we made the appeal to you also, Sir, that there were some substantial issues involving international relations, and it could have been greatly of benefit to the House and everybody else, had the hon. Prime Minister found it convenient then, but this work schedule did not permit it. Now, he has made a statement, which would have been preferable if it had been made subsequently, but he chose his timings and his priorities. Having made it, what I said to the hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs was we are aware of the obligations of the Prime Minister on the 20th February. I don't say that we do justice to the subject if we meet for half-an-hour or forty minutes whether the Prime Minister is here, or, not here. It leaves a sense of incompleteness. I don't want to make it a contentious issue. We are in the hands of the Business Advisory Committee. But, we are of the view that if we have to follow the conventions of the House and to have reasonable clarifications, to which the hon. Prime Minister has the occasion and the time to reply, that is preferable to rushing through it on the 20th. That is our view, Sir,.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House is adjourned till 11.00 A.M., Monday, the 20th February, 2006.

The House then adjourned at seventeen minutes past five of the clock till eleven of the clock on Monday, the 20th February, 2006.

MGIPMRND—989RS—31-08-2006.